

a hierarchy of lesser *Gestalten*. And
 Kohler suggests
 that this view of the nature of the organism
 opens out a
 prospect of purely physico-chemical
 explanation of all the
 vital processes. Unlike the many authors
 who call such
 explanation mechanistic, he repudiates
 that adjective,
 restricting it to explanation in terms of
 strict machine-
 theory. The *Gestalt* principle, he suggests,
 is not only a
 principle of organization, but also the
 dynamic principle
 which underlies all organic processes and
 must explain in
 physical terms all the seemingly teleological
 activities of
 organisms, from the simpler restitutions and
 regulations
 of lowly organisms to the volitional
 activities of men.
 And this dynamic principle is the tendency
 of every
Gestalt to maintain and restore a dynamic
 equilibrium.
 Compare the soap-bubble or cluster of soap-
 bubbles with
 a number of shot gathered in a circular group
 on a smooth,
 horizontal surface. You may remove one of
 the latter,
 leaving the rest undisturbed; prick one
 bubble of your
 cluster, and the rest respond, seeking a new
 distribution of
 equilibrium or stationary state. Because
 in the *Gestalt*
 every unit affects and is affected by the
 whole, the prin-
 ciple which has long been said to characterize
 cells as units
 of multicellular organisms is true also of the
 units of every
Gestalt; the fate and the properties of
 the unit are in
 some degree functions of its position in the
 whole. And
 this tendency towards equilibrium is other
 and more than
 an expression of the second law of
 thermodynamics, or
 the law of entropy, which organisms seem able
 in consider-

able measure to defy.
Of course, Kohler does not deny the
importance of the
chemical changes which in every living tissue
are constantly
going on. The question is : How far would a
combina-
tion of Goldschmidt's chemical principles
with Kohler's